



**STATE OF WASHINGTON  
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR STANDARDS BOARD**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **First administration of basic skills test for prospective teachers set for Saturday**

A group of prospective teachers will make their way to seven testing centers on Saturday and become the first pool of candidates to take a new state-mandated basic skills assessment, a requirement for teacher certification. The Washington Educator Skills Test-Basic (WEST-B), developed by National Evaluation Systems under the direction of Washington's Professional Educator Standards Board, will be required of all candidates entering teacher preparation programs as well as teachers moving into the state with established credentials.

While a higher education institution can make a judgment call and admit someone to a preparation program who has not passed the test, the would-be educator must pass the basic skills test before becoming certified to teach.

"We have raised standards for students in Washington," explained Dr. Terry Bergeson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, "and the Washington Educator Skills Test-Basic (WEST-B) will help ensure that new teachers in Washington have the skills to help their students reach those standards."

"While all of the state's approved teacher preparation programs have had basic skills requirements for their students," said Representative Dave Quall, Chair of the House Education Committee, "the Legislature wanted to make sure that those skills were measured consistently. The WEST-B will ensure that all new teachers have basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics."

"Washington joins 45 other states in requiring teachers to pass a basic skills test prior to certification, a requirement that reflects the general understanding that prospective teachers cannot profit from their education unless they have these skills", said Stephen Klein, senior research scientist at RAND and a consultant to the PESB. "Teachers are role models for the kids in their class with the language they use, what they write, and the math skills they demonstrate. It's hard to imagine that teachers without these skills can be effective."

That sentiment was echoed in Washington when the Legislature directed PESB to establish two new tests: one for basic skills designed to test candidates entering preparation programs, and a second test of subject knowledge to measure mastery on leaving the program.

"With this test the PESB has taken an important step to improve the public's confidence in the skills of our teachers," said Senator Rosemary McAuliffe, Chair of the Senate Education Committee.

This requirement applies to those seeking admission beginning in Fall 2002; candidates who have already been admitted to teacher preparation programs and who expect to start their studies in the 2002-03 calendar year will not have to take the test. Teachers from other states can teach on a temporary permit for up to one year before they must pass the WEST-B.

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